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POLAND: Church Politics

Archbishop Glemp is preparing to meet with Premier Jaruzelski. The regime plans to undercut Solidarity by forming "special groups" as the nucleus of new unions.

Glemp, who returned to Warsaw this week from Rome, reportedly will meet with Jaruzelski before the Church Episcopate meets at the end of the month. After the bishops meet, the Church apparently will publish an assessment of the current situation.

the regime is now willing "in principle" to conduct discussions with Solidarity leader Walesa, although it has not agreed to a date or the conditions for such talks. The source would not confirm press reports that a meeting had been arranged among Walesa, rural Solidarity leader Kulaj, and Church representatives.

Comment: Glemp probably will once again raise such issues as ending martial law, releasing detainees, and resuming a dialogue with Solidarity. It is unlikely, however, that the government is ready to conduct serious negotiations with Walesa or otherwise go very far toward meeting the Church's demands.

Building New Unions

A reliable source claims that the party Central Committee has drawn up intricate plans to build new trade unions. The first step is to form "special groups" comprised of former Solidarity members well disposed toward the regime, union activists who lost their jobs for objecting to Solidarity's political involvement, and government agents.

Special group activists would be under instructions to play down the importance of Solidarity in favor of efforts to improve living and working conditions. The groups would be organized along craft lines rather than on Solidarity's geographical basis in order to help them focus on local economic grievances.

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Comment: Few workers are likely to accept the special groups as alternatives to Solidarity. The government might promote these groups, nevertheless, in order to create the impression that union activity is resuming and to provide authorities with a new instrument of control in the workplace. [REDACTED]

Military Situation

[REDACTED] in Warsaw stated that a "major thing," which he would not define further, will take place in Poland during the second half of March.

[REDACTED] warned a colleague to return to Poland before 15 March to avoid being stuck outside the country as he had when martial law was declared. [REDACTED] believes the Soviets may be planning an exercise as a show of force in the face of continuing resistance in Poland. [REDACTED]

Comment: Although the Soviets are concerned about unrest in Poland, there is no indication that they now view events as threatening the government's control. There is also no other information indicating that a major exercise is expected. If an exercise involving over 25,000 troops is scheduled to occur in mid-March, however, the Poles should announce it within the next week or so in accordance with the Helsinki agreement. [REDACTED]

The Soviets may believe that such an exercise is necessary to remind the populace of the possible consequences of resistance to the regime and to forestall an increase in unrest in the spring. The Soviets, however, probably have considered the effect a large Warsaw Pact exercise would have on the West Europeans who have been reluctant to impose strong sanctions against Poland or the USSR since martial law. Such an exercise would further dampen the peace movement in Western Europe. [REDACTED]

Polish security forces have been noted in greater strength in the Warsaw area recently, indicating that the government may be anticipating protests. There has been no indication, however, that military forces that returned to garrison following martial law operations are preparing to redeploy. [REDACTED]

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